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Our returnees were surprised with awards and a welcome home party. Cutting the cake from left to right are MAJ Bob Poole, MAJ Dave Hurley, Bob Conley, MAJ Kim Colloton, Kimberli Gray, Susan Tianen and Maria Garzino.

Back from Iraq and AFGHANISTAN

RETURNEES GET AWARDS, HEAR NEWS OF CORPS IRAQ DIVISION AND LONGER TOURS OF DUTY

It came as no surprise to the eight District team members given awards and decorations at a headquarters ceremony Nov. 5, but the Corps of Engineers is founding an Iraq Division in January.

COL Richard Thompson made the announcement to a standing-room-only crowd honoring the returnees from Iraq. He said the new division would have a general officer in charge of three districts, with about 100 people in each district. "A lot will depend on reachback to here," he said. "A lot of projects (in Iraq) depend on continuity."

Thompson estimated that $20 billion of the recently approved $87 billion budget for the war on terror has been targeted for the reconstruction of Iraq, with one-third of that aimed at Iraqi infrastructure. The Corps' entire annual budget is about $7 billion.

Rather than the 4-, 5- or 6-month tours District FEST members served this year, one-year temporary change-of-station assignments will be the norm for the new Iraq Division. "So we're looking for people like you," Thompson said. "This is a great mission, and our country needs people."

He also announced that LTC John Guenther, the District's deputy chief engineer, would be deploying to Iraq soon.

IN THIS ISSUE

Commander . . . . .COL Richard G. Thompson **Editor . . . . . Dr. Fred-Otto Egeler**
All stories Mike Tharp

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INTRODUCTION

One of the best testaments to those returning from war was written in the 19th century by the poet, Alfred Lord Tennyson, about Ulysses, Homer's hero in the Trojan War. We reprint part of it here to welcome home our own from their war:

I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honored of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

Working for USAID is new experience for LA District engineer

Maria Garzino received a medal for her work as the senior mechanical engineer in Operation Iraqi Freedom, while serving as part of the USAID Iraq Reconstruction Office. The citation lauded her for her work on environmental projects and how she performed quality design review and construction surveillance on work associated with the redevelopment and reconstruction of Iraqi infrastructure, while operating in a dangerous, threatening environment.

One of the USACE SUVs after the Iraqis dropped a grenade on it and emptied a 9mm pistol through the roof.

Maria Garzino in front of the Black Hawk which she took on tour Iraq while doing battle damage assessments on various bridges.

ANDREWS + IRAQIS + 'COMMANDO CONTRACTS' = FIRE STATIONS

Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam!

The staccato beat echoed through Baghdad's Western suburbs. Instead of ducking the usual AK-47 fire, however, Ed Andrews slipped around to the rear of the Al Bayaa fire station he was helping to rebuild.

And choked back tears.

The noise was hammer blows—the only friendly bang-bang he'd known during his four months in the Iraqi capital. Iraqi workmen were fixing their neighborhood's looted-and-burned fire station. "It occurred to me it was the first time I'd heard loud sounds that weren't gunshots," Andrews recalls. "And thinking I had some part in this (reconstruction)—I had to go back behind the building for awhile. Then I finished my inspection."

Andrews, head of the District's Emergency Management Branch, had deployed this spring with other members of the Division's FEST-A team. Included were Maj. Kim Colloton, Bob Conley, Dick Aldrich, Donna Russell, Russ Jaramillo, and Albert Sidholm. After two weeks of training, the team flew to Fort Bliss, Tex., then on to Kuwait where they waited to enter Iraq. That they did on May 5, after President Bush announced on May 1 the end of "major combat operations."

Andrews' experiences over the next 100 days or so provide a riveting case study of how the Corps is helping rebuild a nation and society. His story is also a refreshing antidote to the negative drumbeat of what's going wrong in Iraq. Throughout his tour, Andrews displayed a deft diplomatic touch, encouraging Iraqis he dealt with to believe that they were in charge—"President Bush is paying me," he told them, "but I'm working for you". He also successfully appealed to their national pride, insisting that the jobs they were doing were in their best interests, that it was their own money (assets once stashed away by Saddam Hussein) they were spending.

And after four months, Andrews' track record in rebuilding Baghdad's fire stations reversed the stereotype of government inefficiency versus private sector competence. He and his Iraqi counterparts initiated refurbishment of 11 of the city's 25 fire stations, while giant San Francisco-based Bechtel Corp., also responsible for ports, transportation networks, 1,200 schools and the electricity system, had barely started on the 15 assigned to it. (Unwilling to wait on Bechtel, Andrews included one of their 15 fire stations in his work effort as well.)

ABOVE: Ed Andrews, right, discusses reconstruction with an Iraqi official.

LEFT: Al Karkh Fire Station security measures

It's probably not an exaggeration to suggest that if the Ed Andrews' formula were repeated thousands of times on the ground in Iraq, its people could assume their own sovereignty much sooner. And, of course, American and coalition forces could then come home.

"It's the most significant thing I've ever done at the Corps," reflects the 27-year veteran. "They talk about 'an Army of one'—well, I was an Army of one."

Working for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in the chaotic aftermath of the

war, FEST members wore many helmets. Their missions involved assessing the damage to electrical grids, water systems, sewers, schools, hospitals, fire and police stations and municipal buildings, then arriving at cost estimates and awarding contracts.

In the process, they were forced to operate in some decidedly unorthodox ways. Such as sealing deals with a handshake. Or paying contractors with *falafel*-thick wads of cash. Or tele-engineering with their laptops on a table made from a door, in 110-degree heat. Or having their every move around the city choreographed and approved by GPS-wielding military travel agents, 20-year-old U.S. troops.

Andrews reckons that, at various times, he acted as a program manager, project manager, construction engineer, quality control inspector, contracting specialist, resident engineer and public affairs expert. Once in the mess hall of the presidential palace where team members lived, he ran into BG Larry Davis, former South Pacific Division Engineer and his deputy COL Leonardo Flor. "Who's your contracting officer?" Flor asked. "Well, I guess I am," the Emergency Management chief replied. "But it's OK because we're using Iraqi money."

Security concerns kept team members from entering Iraq as quickly as they wanted. After a week of gourmet food at a Kuwaiti four-star hotel, the FEST folks found out they were finally going to cross the border next day. "We were like kids on Christmas Eve," Andrews recalls. "All us middle-aged folks were giddy. We wanted to get out of there, to get on with the mission."

Restroom reconstruction at Al Kadumia

In a convoy of 30 SUVs, interspersed with soldiers riding Humvees for security, the motley crew of Corps, USAID, State Dept. and Kellogg, Brown & Root people bumped for 12 hours over 350 miles of bad roads to Baghdad. The city was still smoking. Somebody asked a sweat-stained sergeant, "Is there any UXO (unexploded ordnance) around?"

"You'll see it," he said. They did: rocket-propelled grenade rounds, hand grenades, land mines, artillery shells, antiaircraft ammo, small arms bullets, even pieces of missiles from U.S. helicopters. The FEST team quickly memorized the postwar mantra: If you didn't drop it, don't pick it up.

They draped mosquito netting around their cots in one of the palaces, which boasted four 15-foot-high busts of Saddam at its corners. MAJ Kim Colloton requisitioned a kitchen to serve as their office, as well as commandeering lawn chairs and a makeshift table. They got hot meals at breakfast and dinner at a circular table once used by the Iraqi president for meetings and an MRE for lunch. Each worked seven days a week, 12 to 18 hours a day.

Andrews initially reported to MG Carl Strock, a rolled-up shirtsleeves officer who donned civvies in his role as infrastructure chief. "He wanted to come across as someone who was there to help them rebuild their country," Andrews says. "I really think it worked." The general once told Andrews the mission was the most important he'd had in his 35-year Army career.

Strock assigned Andrews to fire stations. To reconstruct them, he needed to know how badly they were damaged, which meant he had to go see them. Andrews soon linked up with MAJ Brent Gerald, a reservist and firefighter from Greensboro, N.C., who was working "the big picture." He was responsible for firefighting equipment, firefighters' personal gear, foam, salaries, mapping—details he got from the Iraqi Civil Defense Director General Dr. Ali Sa'aeed Sa'adoon. "Brent was hard-wired into the system," Andrews says.

He was also overworked. Skeptical at first, Gerald came to realize that Andrews really *was* from the federal government and *was* there to help him. "We developed a very close relationship," Andrews says.

The first station Andrews visited was Al Bayaa, which was supposed to serve 1.2 million people with two fire trucks and 15-20 men per shift. The station had been looted of everything not bolted down—and some things that were. Plumbing, lights, showers, all firefighting gear.

But the looters couldn't cart away the firefighters' *esprit*. Andrews came to marvel at their loyalty and dedication, even as they dodged rounds from saboteurs and looters wondering if anything was left to steal. The firefighters started carrying their own weapons at the fire station with Coalition forces approval

Their equipment "was pretty much nonexistent," Andrews remembers. "Cloth jumpsuits, open-toed san-

dals." Firefighters had to contend with electrical, oil and chemical blazes. At one fire he heard about, "they soaked a guy down, sent him into the burning building, and after he came out, they soaked down another one."

After he visually inspected the Al Bayaa fire station, Andrews came up with a cost estimate for repair, based on some 25 line items. He and Aldrich, the Arizona-based contract specialist, then presented their conclusions to a review board, which approved funding with assets seized from Saddam's hoarded cash.

Then Andrews began working closely with the Iraqi director-general. The American asked if he knew any contractors, and the Iraqi produced one who was still owed about $90,000 for his pre-war work. Andrews took the contractor to the site, showed him the line item spreadsheets and left the final figure to the director-general "who took a very hands-on approach, which helped me because I was kind of out of my lane."

The agreed-on price was $30,000 for the fire station, and the contractor said he could do it in five to six weeks. Andrews and the contractor shook hands. "Dick Aldrich called it a commando contract," Andrews recalls with a grin.

Shot-up fire truck outside a station

From spreadsheet to handshake took two hours.

Money came from a finance officer next to a massive basement vault. "They'd take out brand new $100 bills and count it out in front of me," Andrews says. "I signed. The director-general signed, and they handed it to him. I discovered that $100,000 in $100 bills is five or six inches thick. If I was waiting for the way banking is done in the 21st century, I'd still be waiting there."

As reconstruction moved ahead, Andrews would visit the fire station and make progress payments. As he did so, he appealed to the contractor's patriotism. "These are not American funds," Andrews told him. "They are Iraqi funds. It's an Iraqi fire station. You're an Iraqi contractor, so do the right thing for the Iraqi people."

It worked. Andrews says the price was reasonable, the quality of construction good, no complaints from the customer, the Civil Defense Director General. "We were putting Iraqis to work," he observes. "Iraqis were making money. Local people could see progress. We were really making a difference—not just in getting a fire station up and running, but in the attitude of the community."

Firefighters are forced to sleep on floor of Al Bayaa Fire Station because of extensive looting and destruction.

In rebuilding other fire stations, Andrews used another contractor "to get a little price competition." He believes the Corps and USAID were "really pleased" at the results.

Now back in Los Angeles, Andrews is guardedly optimistic about Iraq's future. "It's going to take a while," he says. "It's going to take a lot of money and a concerted effort. It's a shame we weren't ready for this four months ago."

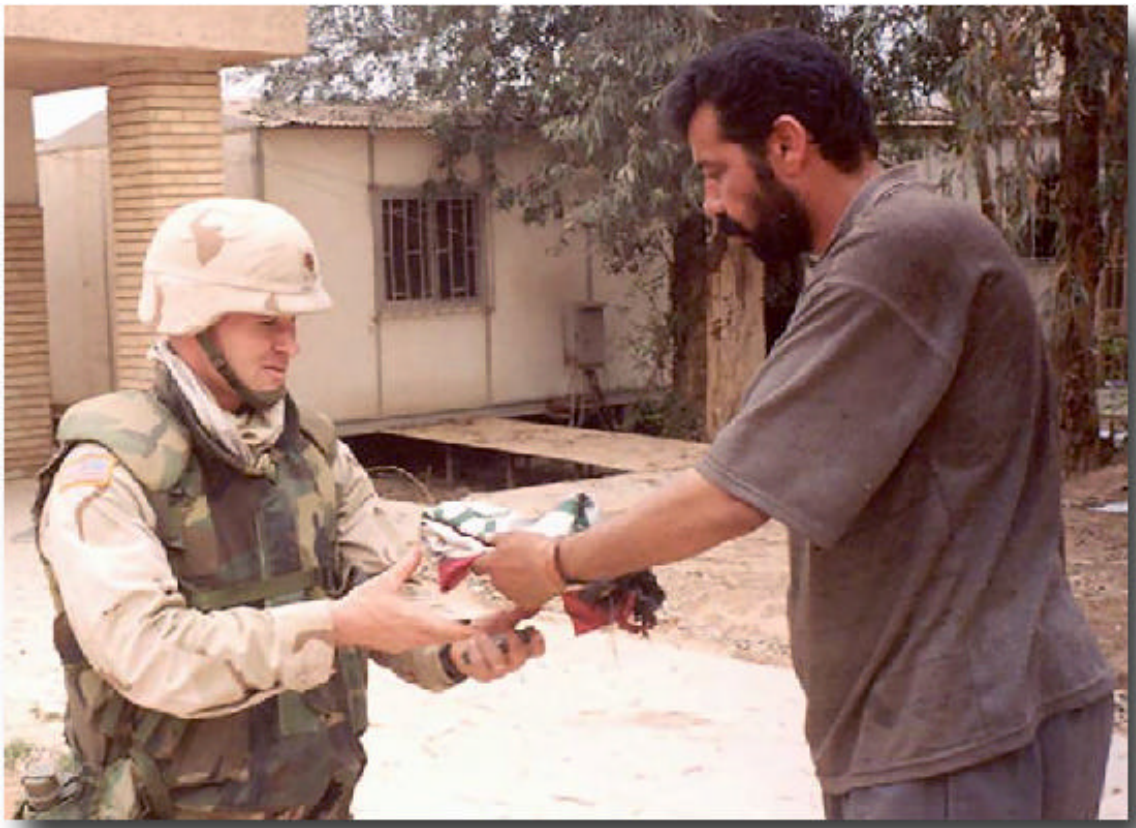
When they first arrived in Iraq, a State Dept. official estimated they'd all be going home in six weeks. Obviously, that was pollyannaish. "The lack of security just stopped everything from happening," Andrews says. "The surprise for us was that security problems got worse. We saw the force protection measures increase, more razor wire, more troops, tanks, machineguns, Bradley fighting vehicles."

Andrews spoke with his wife Sylvia every day to "give her a comfort level she didn't expect." He asked about Kiko, their cat, for example, and "what people talked about around the dinner table." He didn't volunteer many details about his daily life "so she wouldn't get too upset."

He firmly believes that the Corps has a vital mission in Iraq, both military and civilian, "and the brunt of it's going to be on the Corps' civilians. Success will depend on the willingness of civilians to go over there and volunteer and take a chance. I can't recommend too strongly that everyone take this opportunity."

The last day he was in Iraq, he was at a fire station. "I wasn't a hero or brave," he says. "But you just do your job and trust the troops and they really came through for us."

Just as Ed Andrews did.



MAJ Dave Hurley receives an Iraqi flag from a grateful manager of the power plant at Taji, north of Baghdad. Hurley later provided a security team to protect the plant from looters.

Hurley 'First Light' task force brings light and hope to Iraqis in campaign to restore power in Baghdad

En shah Allah.

The phrase heard throughout the Muslim world literally means, "God willing." It could also symbolize the Mideast mission of MAJ Dave Hurley. Back home after five grueling months in Kuwait and Baghdad, the District Southern California area commander won a Bronze Star for his crucial work in bringing power—and thereby hope—to millions of Iraqis.

In the process, the West Point graduate found himself brokering some of the first-ever meetings among Iraqi technocrats (who literally had never met one another under Saddam's regime); ducking sniper fire at his headquarters in one of Saddam Hussein's palaces; driving generals around the beleaguered capital ("I could get a second job as a Baghdad taxi driver"); training local electricity police to protect power stations from looters and saboteurs; interpreting for military and civilian dignitaries and still managing to train for his next triathlon. "We were writing doctrine in the sand," the Arabic linguist recalls. "Our motto was Semper Gumby—always flexible."

As any news consumer knows, the military outcome of the war in Iraq was never in doubt. What has become much more problematic, at least according to contemporary press accounts and commentaries, is the war's aftermath. "The failure of the United States to achieve a decisive victory in Iraq can have a massive effect on the global war (against militant Islam)," Stratford Weekly, a highly regarded geopolitical analysis firm, wrote in late July. "Therefore, the next few weeks and months are, in our mind, absolutely critical in defining the shape—difficulty, length and outcome—of not only the Iraq campaign but the global war as well. We are at a defining moment."

It was toward that postwar scenario that Hurley and his team focused their formidable energies. They knew that winning hearts and minds—far from being a discredited Vietnam strategy—was vital for any American success in Iraq. And as engineers, they knew that hearts and minds could best be won if people had enough electricity to run their clinics, fans and TVs, enough water to drink, cook and bathe with, and enough gasoline to drive their cars and trucks.

Captured Iraqi weapons served as doorstops.

"As planners of the post-hostilities reconstruction of Iraq, we asked ourselves, How are we going to win the peace?" Hurley says. "As engineers our focus was the infrastructure, and as Corps of Engineers members it was how to bring our skills and experience to Iraq for the reconstruction effort."

Those skills and experience led to the formation of Task Force Fajr, which in Arabic means "dawn" or "first light." That was Hurley's idea, based on his training in the language as a student for a year and another year stationed in Jordan. His colleagues at the FEST-P team (Forward Engineer Support Team—Planning)—two civilians and seven other military people—quickly embraced the term and the concept.

Spending two months in Kuwait planning for postwar contingencies, the team advised General Steven Hawkins, a division commander of the Corps' Lakes and Rivers Division. Team members pored over blueprints and databases of the Iraqi infrastructure trying to answer such questions as: What's its condition? Where is it? What facilities should maneuver troops avoid damaging? Which ones should they protect? Who should we trust? Their analyses and conclusions—presented to what was then called the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance—were key to preventing a postwar humanitarian crisis. "We coordinated with them to support their needs, desires, vision for Iraqi reconstruction," Hurley says. "We were trying to work the military forces out of a job."

The Corps of Engineers was to take over re-

His sons' drawings helped brighten Hurley's days.

sponsibility for managing more than $1 billion in contracts from the U.S. Agency for International Development. "As the Corps we were positioned to influence the spending of all those dollars," Hurley explains. "We were on the ground making a difference right away."

Fresh on the tracks of the combat troops, Hurley's FEST team flew into a blacked-out Baghdad International Airport aboard a darkened C-130. All power was off, nearly all lights were out in the city of nearly 5 million. Hurley recites the mantra circulated among all postwar rebuilders: As Baghdad goes, so goes Iraq.

The Corps team rolled up their camo sleeves and got to work.

They gathered up officials from

Iraqi missiles

the Electricity Commission, the Water Commission, the Oil Ministry, the Ministry of Health. Each agency had its own staggering set of problems—decades of paper records had been burned, computers carted away by looters, copper wiring stripped from power lines for black market re-sale. Even before the war, the city's and the country's infrastructure had been in sad shape, untimely ripped apart by years of trying to operating under crippling sanctions, depredations by a corrupt regime, hoarding of vital materials, working through a slow and inefficient UN bureaucracy.

Hurley and his colleagues began introducing officials from government agencies to one another. Any previous management interaction had been severely stovepiped and segmented by the regime. "Some of them had never met," marvels Hurley.

Task Force Fajr's task was helped immensely by Corps' reachback. They unlimbered their laptops and began tele-engineering requests back to Corps districts, often providing Iraqi managers with the only data they had to operate dams, hydroelectric power plants, transformer stations and other facilities. At first, the Iraqi efforts were hamstrung by a medieval communications system that, because of no phone service, required them to swap information via couriers. Hurley and others lent them their satellite telephones until better commo was reestablished.

Day by day, link by link, the national grid was brought back online. Infrastructure protection was and remains a critical issue and, as Hurley puts it, "wherever we were, it was safe; wherever we weren't, it wasn't." His team and 3rd Infantry Division engineers issued uniforms, weapons and orders and helped train a cadre of police officers to guard the transformers and other power points.

Hurley inspected power stations with an Iraqi official.

Complicating things even more were "Baghdaddis," residents of the largest city. Before the war, with 20 percent of the nation's population, they got 40 percent of the power; parts of Iraq hadn't had 24/7 power in more than a decade. As the Corps and other efforts to restore energy progressed, every other part of the country was better off than it had been before, but Baghdad wasn't. "And Baghdaddies aren't shy about complaining," Hurley says, "even though their water supply had never really stopped."

By mid-June, Iraq had gotten back to prewar power levels, but demand had doubled.

For his first two months in-country, Hurley lived in a former presidential palace near the airport—"camping in marble tents," as he describes it. He slept on a cot outside a mosque, enjoyed no electricity or plumbing (using instead an outside slit trench and showering by pouring bottled water over his head) and took turns feeding a small donkey named Saddam.

Hurley was visited by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

His team then moved into a guest house within Saddam's main Republican Palace compound on the Tigris River, and living conditions somewhat improved. Hurley, who's already done 30 triathlons, was able to run a four-mile course around the palace, semi-pedal a wobbly stationary bike in what was once Saddam's son's gym and lift weights confiscated from the late Iraqi leader. He signed up for the L.A., Catalina and Long Beach Triathlons via the Internet from Baghdad. "I couldn't do any swimming over there," Hurley laments.

Moving around the country meant experiencing harassing fire on the team's convoys, avoiding mines disguised in plastic bags on the road and constantly watching overpasses. "It was a reminder you weren't in the project office," the former infantry officer says. "You had to take care of your protection and security first and seriously and then figure how to still get your job done."

Because of his Arabic skills, Hurley often drove senior military and civilian officials around the city and countryside. At one point, checking the map and GPS coordinates, Hurley, leading a four-vehicle convoy in his Humvee, turned to the officer with him: "Sir, except for Special Forces and the 173rd (Airborne Brigade) in Mosul, it now appears we're the northernmost Army unit in Iraq." They finished their mission and quickly drove back to Baghdad.

Task Force Fajr was technically deactivated in mid-June, but the mission to keep rebuilding Iraq continued with remaining and new engineering units. Iraqis, says Hurley, "are very hopeful, like we are, that the future will be bright. Progress is being made on a regular basis, and a lot of people are much better off already."

When Hurley left for the region, his family stayed behind at Fort MacArthur in San Pedro. Wife Louise, whom he's known since childhood when she lived two doors away in Glen Ridge, N.J., took care of their three sons: Seamus, 7, Declan, who turned 4 while his father was overseas, and Cormac, now 1. "I had e-mail and could get phone calls fairly regularly," he says, "but it wasn't great."

Hurley has been in the District a year and expects to stay at least one more. After that he hopes for a deputy engineer's job in another district or as an executive officer with an Engineer troop unit.

He compiled an L.A. -telephone-book-thick scrapbook of photos, mementoes, badges and clippings from his desert sojourn. Equally memorable are the memories from that critical episode in American history, especially one:

"We were checking lines out in the desert, driving a vehicle worth more than the local Iraqis will ever make in their lifetime. To show their appreciation, they'd come out and give us bread."

En shah Allah.

Hurley and an unembedded Geraldo Rivera.

Meanwhile, back in Afghanistan…

Six months in the 'Great Game' becomes key career experience for Contracting's MAJ Robert 'Bob' Poole

"A career-validating experience. The most job satisfaction I've ever had."

That's MAJ Bob Poole, deputy chief of Contracting Branch, talking about his recent six-month tour of duty in Afghanistan. After landing in the war-ravaged nation six days before Christmas 2002, he spent the next half-year helping rebuild it. He saw the borders of both Pakistan and Iran and the Hindu Kush, ranging as far south as Kandahar and as far north as Konduz.

Surviving three fierce attacks by Al Qaeda and Taliban forces, enduring bitter cold, risky travel and seven-day workweeks, the former Air Force enlisted man remains cautiously upbeat about the coalition mission there. He foresees that "a generation or two from now we should reap the benefits of our efforts—but I think we'll be there for awhile."

Poole was based in Kabul, at a compound near the U.S. Embassy and the International Security Assistance Force headquarters, the 30-nation peacekeeping force sanctioned by the UN Security Council (now taken over by NATO). The compound's closeness to such symbols of foreign power made Poole and the Civil Affairs teams, USAID, Special Forces, Corps and other residents "a prime target" for mortar attacks, he said.

He spent 45% of his time-in-country "outside the wire," visiting remote villages to arrange contracts to build and rebuild Afghanistan's medieval infrastructure. He estimates that while visiting 19 locations, he awarded 300 contracts valued at $8 million during his stint, trying to persuade Afghanis there was "a better way to make money than growing poppies and helping the Taliban."

Events that have occurred in Afghanistan since Poole returned to the District magnify the importance of the nation-building tasks he performed. Those events also indicate the scope and scale of what he and other Corps team members had to confront on the ground.

During a two-week period in August when Afghanistan celebrated the 84th anniversary of its independence from Britain, 64 people were killed in attacks scattered around the country; 26 were killed when guerilla groups attacked two police stations; and nine police were ambushed and killed by Taliban gunmen.

Officials of NATO, which took over command of the 5,500-member international security force in August, realize that insurgent forces are becoming more active and organized, especially outside Kabul. "The increased violence comes amid reports that Mullah Mohammed Omar, leader of the ousted Taliban regime, has reorganized his fighters into regional commands," the AP reported from Kabul.

Bob Poole, center, signs for big bucks.

With so much attention, money and resources focused on Iraq, stabilization efforts in Afghanistan have suffered. The U.S. has 8,500 soldiers there, compared with about 140,000 in Iraq, and the Bush administration recently pledged another $1 billion to reconstruction efforts in the South Asian country.

Even so, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other civilian agencies have reduced their medical, food and other operations because of safety concerns.

Poole is sympathetic about the problems. Simply to get to contractors, he flew in C-130s, Chinook, Black-

hawk and Russian helicopters and fragile UN Beechcraft airplanes. He also had two Toyota four-wheel drive vehicles at his disposal, but mainly used them in and around Kabul.

Twice while he was awarding contracts at Asadabad, a town six miles from the Pakistani border, Al Qaeda and Taliban forces attacked the former Soviet compound where he was staying. Lobbing mortars and firing their equivalent of an M-50 machine gun, the insurgents were beaten back by quick-reaction forces made up of Navy Seals, Delta Force, the 82nd Airborne and some CIA officers. In Konduz, a northern city, his compound was hit by overhead tracer fire; then Special Forces teams "went out and did what they do best."

More than the bang-bang, however, Poole remembers the satisfaction of providing money to Iraqi contractors for schools, wells and hospitals. A school with eight to 12 classrooms went for $50,000 to $80,000; a well, depending on how deep and how tough to dig, ranged between $800 and $2,000. His biggest single outlay was $200,000 to refurbish a three-story hospital at Konduz.

As chief of Contracting for the Combined Joint Task Force-180 Kabul office, Poole's main role was to support the Combined Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force; its mission, in turn, was to win the hearts and minds of the Afghani people. He worked with teams of engineers, project managers, civil affairs officers and soldiers who compiled village assessments--how many women, how many men, how many children under 12, location of the nearest well—to determine the village's needs.

Once those were established, a civil affairs team would nominate projects, then a committee at Bagram would review the requirements to see if they were valid. "A lot of times some areas would get a lot more assistance based on their cooperation with our soldiers," Poole recalls. "Sometimes villagers were rewarded for information provided to U.S. Special Forces when they were hunting down Al Qaeda and the Taliban."

Poole's job was to listen to local contractors and their proposals for a project. "We'd try to find the best value for the government's money," he says. "We wouldn't have one contractor do all the work." He encouraged them to use local skilled and unskilled labor so the money would stay in the village, and he sometimes had to give 20% to 30% of the contract's value up front in cash so the contractors could get materials.

He also helped supply the nascent Afghan army, being trained by U.S. Special Forces and National Guard units at the Military Training Center in Kabul: Uniforms, shoes, boots, bedding, wooden bunk beds, wood stoves. "I witnessed four battalions get trained and placed in remote areas to assist our soldiers," he says.

Poole sitting on a captured Russian scout motorcycle.

Poole is encouraged by two other developments he saw during his tour. One was the recent formation of Provisional Reconstruction Teams, 50-soldier outfits including infantry, military police, engineers and civil affairs specialists. Their mission is to go "one step farther" than American remote fire teams "and help rebuild their region," he explains. "Those teams will help force the Afghanis to be more on their

own, rather than depending on the NGO supplies they've received for so many years."

The other positive came from Poole's own initiative. Most of the contracts he awarded for schools were for girls' schools, sadly lacking in the male-dominated Muslim society. "I saw a lot of promise in Afghani females," Poole says. "There's hope for those Afghani women who are trained."

Poole constantly asked his interpreter whether he and other Americans were doing any good. His response is instructive. He told Poole: "You're not going to get the adults to trust you. They've been through the war with the Russians, so many invasions. You can only hope to influence the children."

Poole short-lists several suggestions for any successors heading for Afghanistan:

Future girls' school student

--Get in touch with the person you're going to replace;

--Bring many computer disks (which don't survive long over there) and zip-lock bags to keep out the dust;

--Take two months' worth of personal toiletries—some are available but not all;

--Pack an electric razor—water supplies are fickle;

--A warm pair of boots will be handy during the bitterly cold winter.

Besides his Kevlar and weapon, Poole was also never without his digital camera. He made as many as 2,000 photos for himself, and says one of the most satisfying things he did in Afghanistan was to take pictures of soldiers he met in rugged remote areas. "I'd take digital pictures, get their e-mail addresses, download their pictures and then send them back to their families," he says. "I made some new friends that way."

And enjoyed a career-validating experience.

Moonscape surrounding a battered school

Which way is L.A.?

Colloton earns respect of Iraqis and teammates in repairing Baghdad Police Stations, Army base

The inscription in the 1977 engineering textbook simply reads: "To the person that try all her best to rebuilt my country. Thank you." It is signed, "Engineer Raid Jamil."

MAJ Kim Colloton got it from the Iraqi engineer not long before she left Baghdad after five months as the Division's FEST team leader. The textbook, about building technology and mechanical and electrical systems, was probably one of the last foreign source works available to Iraqi engineers after Saddam Hussein seized power in 1979 and sharply curtailed outside contacts.

Its presentation as a farewell gift to the L.A. District High Desert area commander speaks volumes about the gratitude she inspired among Iraqis as she pursued her mission. The team leader supervised a diverse group of Corps civilians, for whom the herding-cats analogy might be an understatement. "It was like making soup," she recalls. "You can throw a bunch of things in and you don't know what you're going to get till it boils down. None of us had ever worked together before, so I was lucky to have a team that could produce results."

Bob Gifford, State Department, standing, MAJ Colloton, center, and CSM Guyette, 18th Military Police Brigade, map out rehab efforts for police stations in Baghdad.

Richard Heine, Ft Worth District, and MAJ Colloton in front of the People's Palace in central Baghdad.

She took on the specific mission to begin reconstruction of 80 police stations in Baghdad and was also asked to help facilitate construction work associated with the New Iraqi Army training facility 20 miles from the Iranian border. "Police were considered corrupt before," the New York native explains. "Nobody trusted them, they were a bad symbol of the old regime, so their facilities were looted and burned and were in desperate need of repair. Police stations are supposed to be places where you can go to get help—not to be turned away."

Not only did the police facilities need repair, but the entire police force needed to be retrained—and both had to occur simultaneously.

During a kaleidoscopic tour of duty, Colloton commandeered a kitchen which became famous as a video-teleconferencing center; used Saddam regime money hidden beneath lion's cages and dog kennels to pay local contractors; lost enough weight to tighten up three belt holes (she later regained one belt hole's worth); and found time with the team to tour the ancient city of Babylon.

She quickly came to realize the humor behind what one American general said about the whole Iraqi mission: "We're all operating on the ragged edge of our

MAJ C. talks with Iraqi police officials and engineers at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for an Al-Thawra station.

incompetence and about to be discovered at any moment."

Originally, the Division FEST team was headed for southern Iraq, but an 11th-hour directive sent them to Baghdad. Colloton was glad. "The main focus was Baghdad," she says. "The money went to Baghdad. The main leaders were in Baghdad." As a result, she believes her FEST team tended to be at the cutting edge among other Corps outfits: "They were still doing assessments while we were doing construction."

From the outset, she and her cohorts had to wing it. Colloton, a former company commander in the 27th Engineer Battalion Combat Airborne, found herself in charge of a bunch of civilians as independent as they were competent. Used to years under the same boss and accustomed to routine, her new charges sometimes chafed at the chain of command.

One typical exchange: "You're not my supervisor!" "Yes, I am! This is no joke! We're at war!"

She relied on one-on-one sit-downs to defuse tensions and explain how things had to work. She credits her 11 years in the Army with preparing her for the managerial challenge. "There was no one answer for everybody," she relates. "Each person had different reactions to what they were comfortable and uncomfortable with. It was a dangerous environment and everybody's safety was at risk. We had to share information, to synthesize it so we were all moving in the same direction."

Take moving, for instance. The FEST team first camped in one of the presidential palaces, then were assigned to trailers, finally to the Al-Rashid Hotel. Each move brought more creature comforts, such as air conditioning, but some of the civilians found the drill unacceptable and became agitated. For Colloton, who has pulled tours at Fort Bragg, N.C., Fort Hood, Tex., and South Korea, packing and unpacking were routine. "The pace of airborne operations is fast and furious," she says. "Long hours, you gotta be flexible and you gotta keep up. The difficulty was trying to transfer that knowledge to civilians."

In refurbishing the devastated police stations, Colloton, who holds a master's from Stanford, collaborated closely with Iraqi civilian police, military police, the Ministry of Interior, facility engineers and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). "We were trying to get the Iraqi money from the CPA bank accounts back into the hands of the Iraqis—we needed to get the economy going and get them back to work, so then the military police could go back to doing security."

An Army of One: the major builds Baghdad.

She had one close call. While driving one of the team's Suburbans, she saw a figure roll a green object toward the vehicle. Grenades are green. "Fortunately, nothing happened, but that was the kind of stuff that happened," she shrugs. "You become almost comfortable with the sound of gunfire—it was the other stuff I kept looking for."

As a curtain call, after she had extended her tour by a month, Colloton organized the first-ever (at least during Saddam's tenure) conference among Iraqi engineers. Titled the First National Conference for Construction and Partnering in Iraq, the event was held in Baghdad Sept. 8-9.

During the bad old days, Baghdad dictated all policies, but the conference sought to teach those attending that each governance (province) could now spend its own money on its own projects. Engineers arrived, for instance, from three Kurdistan governances—the first time they'd ever been invited to participate in such a meeting in the capital. At first, a hostile atmosphere prevailed, but by the end of the conference, "people were comfortable with one another," Colloton says. "They were building relationships in the partnering sessions to work together."

Colloton evaluates Iraq's prospects with the gimlet eye of the jumpmaster she once was for paratroopers over North Carolina. "They (Iraqis) have a lot of things to rehabilitate, rebuild and perform maintenance on to get the infrastructure up where it should be," she says. "Water and sewers in Baghdad need an upgrade to support any future growth. We'll help them get more organized, more contracting procedures in place.

"We need to give them the ability to get the best quality supplies to rebuild their country. It'll take a couple of years, and then they'll be ready to go on their own."

The daylong trip to the ancient city of Babylon clearly enchanted Colloton. "I realized then that Iraq is special, it is where the Garden of Eden was supposed to have been, right where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers come together. The history is really rich."

Before she went there, Colloton read the Book of Daniel as background. In it, there's a verse that captures the spirit of the Coalition mission to the Middle East:

"…And for the majesty that (God) gave him, all people, nations and languages, trembled and feared him; whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him."

MAJ Colloton and the future of Iraq.

DESK JOCKEY CONLEY SWAPS CEFMS CARD FOR BACKPACK FULL OF BENJAMINS TO REBUILD BAGHDAD BUILDINGS

Conley confirms it's not counterfeit.

For a man on his first-ever overseas assignment, Bob Conley sure picked a doozy.

After years as a numbers-crunching desk jockey, the southern California native swapped his mythical green eyeshade for a Kevlar helmet in Baghdad. Instead of fighting freeway traffic or wrestling with CEFMS, Conley found himself driving past discarded rocket-propelled grenades in 140-degree heat or videoconferencing with engineers back on Earth (as the GI's call the U.S.).

"Nobody ever let me out to play before," Conley says with his usual irony. "It was certainly interesting."

Like other FEST members, he took on a specific slice of Baghdad's infrastructure—in his case, municipal buildings. First, it was a dozen of them, including two 14-story structures (City Hall and the Water Supply Headquarters), others with cookie-cutter two- or three-story designs. Nearly all had been looted and vandalized—wiring ripped out, walls bashed in, light plugs and fixtures hauled off.

Looters left Conley little to rebuild with.

Armed with rough grid coordinates, Conley took an interpreter, who knew the streets, and went to the buildings. Garbed in the same Kevlar and flak jackets as his colleagues, he inspected them and returned to the FEST office to put together estimates to submit for approval. "I was working with Baghdad city engineers to get the water and lights on, the doors and locks put back," he recalls. "They were pretty competent, well-educated and most of them I was with spoke English as a second language."

Early on, to line up contractors, Conley donned a backpack—full of cash. At City Hall, he sat down with city engineers and contractors and disbursed the $100 bills. "I was counting up about $200,000 we were

going to be paying contractors with throughout the city," Conley explains. "$5,000 here, $20,000 there—the city engineers had set up probably 20 contracts. I'd never seen that much new money, all sequential."

On many trips to the field, Conley was the designated driver. Although he avoided ambushes and firefights, "there were a few times I was uncomfortable" with the security environment. "If there was something I didn't have to do that day, I'd work in the office, or I could do it another day if I didn't like it."

Conley's assessment of his interaction with the Iraqi professionals is a pragmatic one. "We got 'em on the road," he says, "but it's a little hard to get 'em to perform. Getting a change done was sometimes a slower process than it needed to be. I learned that 'En shah Allah' [God wills it] means it's not going to get done."

One U.S. regional director asked Conley to inspect a bridge at Taji, north of Baghdad. "The (U.S.) Air Force did an excellent job," Conley says, referring to a bomb crater in the middle of the bridge. But the abutments were intact, so he suggested that the Iraqis buy new girders to renovate the structure.

Among Conley's more vivid memories from his tour is a farewell party for the outgoing reconstruction leader, retired LTG Jay Garner, held at one of the palaces. "The team all went," Conley remembers. "We stepped into the pool area and then I locked on the target—a green Heineken can on ice. I got my hands on one, but my teammates were nowhere to be found."

Conley eventually found them outside, rounded them up and herded them back to where their first beers in months awaited. "You gotta keep your eye on the ball," warns the 22-year Corps veteran.

Although he never served in the military, Conley quickly became simpatico with American soldiers. "They were working under tough conditions, sleeping in the dirt, no cold water," he says. Whenever their six armed escorts in Humvees accompanied the engineers on their rounds, FEST members gave them water bottles frozen in their requisitioned freezer. "They were 1.5 liter ice cubes," Conley laughs. The engineers also lent their cell phones to the GI's so they could call home.

Over the months, living conditions gradually improved for Conley and his teammates. One irony: they moved from a fan-cooled palace to a portable trailer with air conditioning. "Only in Baghdad is moving from a palace to a trailer moving up," sighs Conley. After only a week in the fancy trailer, they were moved to the Al-Rashid Hotel.

His after-action report on his Iraqi experience is also pragmatic. Specifically, he advocates more funding to keep construction moving. "I think it's going to take them three to five years to get their system up and running," he says. "It was in pretty poor shape before the war started. Add in the vandalism and looting, the bombing that took out the phone system in Baghdad—it will be a year or more to get the land lines up again.

Yup! It's empty all right. Safes had been looted.

"The Iraqis were helpful and supportive of what we were doing, plus we needed to provide support to them too."

Conley is undecided about going back. But then, "I'm here working on CEFMS and payroll, and it reminds me of why I went there in the first place."

So even if the first adventure is the last one, it was a great one.

The Queen of trash

Meet the Trash Lady of Baghdad.

A/k/a The Rubble and Demolition Lady. A/k/a "Trash and Trouble" by Australian troops in Iraq. A/k/a Susan Tianen, District safety officer, who, during four months in Baghdad, was shot at three times, saw a Division colleague wounded in an ambush, lost her closest Iraqi counterpart to assassins and recoiled from negative stories about her work in two major newspapers.

She also ramped up the capital city's most efficient sanitary system in decades, deploying everything from donkey carts to satellite photos to clean up a mess symbolized by a six-story-high garbage pile. She began a rubble removal and building demolition program that ultimately brought her to the smoldering ruins of the suicide-bombed United Nations headquarters. She compiled a CD of haunting images of Iraqi children, which was shown at the international donors' conference in Spain. "The load we carried was really, really, really heavy," she recalls, "and you are 100% dependent on your team, your interpreter, your buddies, your soldiers."

Susan Tianen sits on one of Saddam's golden thrones in one of his Baghdad palaces.

Tianen, whose safety officer resume includes dealing with hazardous waste and industrial material, was stunned when she arrived in Baghdad. Not so much at the savage ravages of war as at the disconnect among many Iraqis on how their garbage could make them sick. "There was no connection between disease, infant mortality rates and sanitation," she says. "They didn't have the educational background and information telling them that you don't slaughter your livestock next to where you sell produce."

Ranging out into the unsettled city five days a week, Tianen first attacked the trash issue as if it were a math problem. What's the population of Baghdad and how much trash is generated? Around 5 million and 22,113 tons a week, respectively, including the airport, central *souk* and prisons. How much to haul it away? That calculated out to 1,460 vehicles making 4,290 trips a week to the dump.

Which dump? Throughout the Saddam era, the main dump was 20 miles northeast of Baghdad, in a landfill purposely planted above a water table used for drinking by the local Shiite population. (The old regime favored Sunnis at the expense of Shiites.) The landfill at what was once called Saddam City (now Sadr City) contaminated the Shiites' water, but it also provided jobs and resources for 150,000 people, Tianen says.

Tons of trash never made it to any dump. Tianen saw one pile stacked six stories high in a narrow suburban lane; had it been removed, the walls next to it would have collapsed because it had become part of the housing structure. For decades, residents simply tossed their garbage outside their front doors; apartment-dwellers used their windows. Richer families who tipped civil servants got an occasional pickup; the poor didn't. "When trash took over, there was no place for the kids to play, no soccer fields, and you even got used to the smell," Tianen says.

She wanted to move the dump from the Shiites' home turf, so she reached back to the Mississippi Valley District for satellite images of what places were available and acceptable.

Some urban trash piles towered six stories high.

Once she picked a new site, Tianen conferred with the mayor and governing council, and the mayoralty hired a director-general of landfills and nine directors of sanitation to correspond to Baghdad's nine *baladiya*, or sectors. She handed out maps of their areas of responsibility—a bold move since Saddam had removed all maps from universities and most ministries.

Then came, to paraphrase "Catch 22," The Great Big Map Problem of Baghdad. Unfamiliar with their hometown's geography as scanned from hundreds of miles up, the newly appointed sanitation satraps were dumbfounded. No, that's not my city, cried one. You don't know what you're talking about, shouted another. They also argued over the size of the maps, so Tianen went back to the cartographers and had them make every map the same size, color and scale.

The Baghdadis then complained that the maps didn't show any landmarks they could identify, so Tianen had military mappers include mosques, parks, fountains and other features in their zones. "Everybody went running out to confirm," she recalls. "So we finally came up with maps we could communicate with them about."

After maps came rules. Anyone caught dumping in another's territory had his vehicle confiscated for a day. All vehicles had to be named and numbered so they wouldn't be hired elsewhere for double-dip pay. Vehicles included back loaders and dump trucks, of course, but also wheelbarrows and donkey carts to negotiate *burka*-wide alleys.

Her blueprint needed office backup. The new Iraqi trashnocrats had never laid out a budget, hadn't used a checkbook, didn't know what line-items were. Tianen had to tutor them in basic accounting which, among other things, forbids tipping—the *baksheesh* so common in Middle Eastern commerce.

Security worries meant that maneuver units had to accompany garbage men. A military officer mentored each sanitation engineer, who mirrored them for a month. Then the military backed away. Inevitably, with such a brand-new system, there were problems. One district's efforts folded, others wobbled. Eventually, however, all the *baladiya* were fully operational with little oversight.

Before long, 200,000 day laborers were hired at $3 a day, $11 million total for Baghdad's cleanup program. By the time Tianen was ready to move onto her next mission—removing rubble and demolished buildings—Sadr City was the cleanest it had been in 10 years. "We needed to get money out in the communities," she explains. "We had to get them to start taking ownership of this."

The improvement didn't impress everybody. "The cleanup has also provided new opportunities for corruption and child labor," the Los Angeles Times reported. "Families desperate to obtain the $3 daily salary are sending tykes out in the street to join the garbage brigade," said the Washington Post.

Talkin' trash with Iraqi officials.

Stung by the criticism, Tianen has reacted strongly. She insisted that the Iraqis comply with an age limit of 15, and since there was no minimum wage, $3 a day was a windfall for the poor. She had no idea that "mafia-type behavior" would lead to falsifi-

Military mentors watched the city's new garbage men.

cation of age and other records; plus it was tough to audit records in Arabic, and some workers couldn't even write their names. Moreover, school was out so boys were free to do the work, which girls and women weren't allowed to do. "Do you want to employ the kid, whose mother is a war widow and in desperate need of money?" Tianen asks rhetorically. "You can't balance that against standards in America," adding that many youth organizations join cleanup campaigns in the U.S.

Harsh newspaper critiques paled compared to being shot at three times. The first time, in a convoy, one of her personal security detail (PSD) yelled, "Susan, down!" She did then, but hadn't become "situationally aware" when the second incident occurred; as a result she was thrown to the ground by her PSD. "The third time I still had my PSD and I felt I was OK," she remembers.

Then, because only diplomats and general officers were authorized to have a military PSD, Tianen's guardians were transferred—one went to the Navy Seals. She refused to go out on her own. "Even if I had been given a gun, I wouldn't have used it," she asserts. "I don't value my life above anyone else's life. But I would pick up one and use it in defense of one of my team members and soldiers."

Without an armed escort, Tianen didn't venture out for three days. Then her PSD was restored, but at some cost to her reputation. "I wasn't being 'obstinate' and I didn't think I was better than anyone else," she insists. "I was just scared. I was willing to do my job, but I needed some level of security so I'd feel safe."

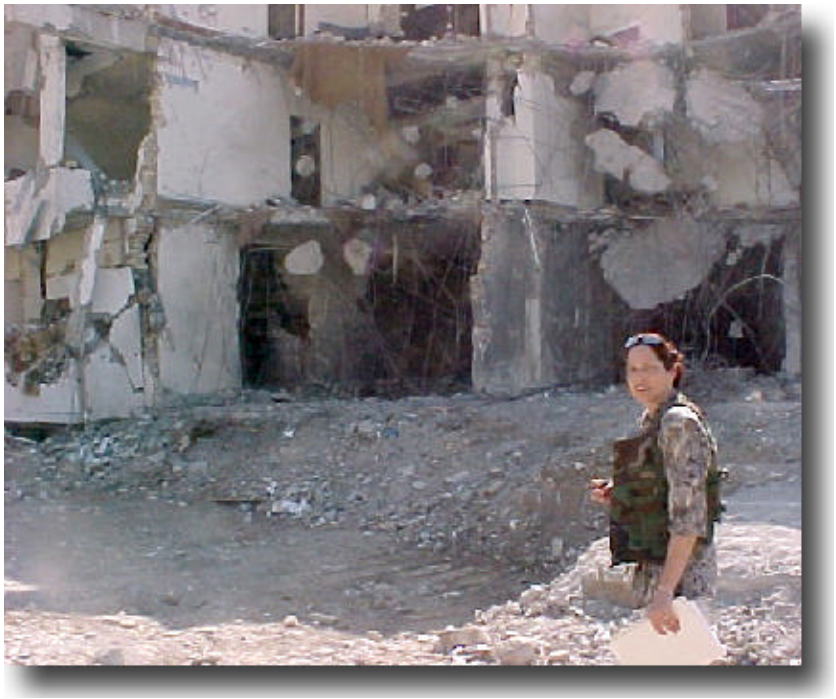
Her concerns were well-founded. Shortly after she returned to the U.S., she learned that her friend and confidant, Baghdad Deputy Mayor Faris Abdul Razaq al-Assam, was shot dead outside his home by unknown assassins. Tianen had gotten to know him well, visiting his home several times where she met his wife and family. She had given him her photo CD titled "Uncommon Life" to take to the donors' conference in Spain. "He would probably have been the first elected president of Iraq," she says wistfully. "He showed the Coalition the heart of an Iraqi, what the people of Iraq could aspire to be."

Tianen views Iraq and Iraqis through a prism of hope and doubt. Hope rests with the young. "The kids are going to be the beneficiaries, not the adults," she says. "The kids saw something they'll never see again—the American spirit! Every 18-year-old soldier there who interacts with one child makes a huge difference. I don't think that child will be planting a bomb."

Her doubt pivots on the question of how long the military and civilian coalition stays in the country. "(The Iraqis) are very afraid that we're going to leave," she says. "Being a socialist country, there's no incentive for them to work on a timetable. It's not going to go as fast as America wants because they don't have the same goal—the Iraqis don't want the Americans to leave."

As for Tianen herself? "I'd go back," she says. "But my family doesn't want me to.

"So…."



Outside the suicide-bombed UN Building

'NOTHING'S EASY IN BAGHDAD—BUT 'ON-ON!'

Dick Aldrich has been around the block.

Tank gunner in Vietnam. Tight spots in Panama and South America. Khobar Towers after they were blown up in Saudi Arabia.

But of all the experiences he's crammed into a life sometimes on the edge, Baghdad was best. "They pale in comparison to this one," says the Arizona-based contract specialist. "It was a most wonderful adventure. It was a proud time to be working for the Corps of Engineers."

One of the Division FEST-A members, Aldrich followed the same path to Iraq as the others—from California to Fort Bliss to Kuwait to Iraq's capital city, where he spent just over 100 days. He lavishes praise on his colleagues, unabashedly noting that "we had this emotional feeling for one another, for the team—we just clicked."

Children wait outside for the school bell.

The team cherishes two mantras from their time together in the crucible of Iraq. "Nothing is easy in Baghdad" is self-explanatory. And, because they joined as a group in the weekly Friday night run of the Baghdad chapter of the Hash House Harriers, the FEST-ers adopted as their credo the same rallying cry the running club has shouted since it was formed by British expats in Malaysia in the late 1930s: "On-On!"

Their camaraderie also came from sharing the same risks, dangers and "prisoners-in-a-palace" living conditions. And part of it flowed from the bottom-line results they achieved. "The things we did just amaze me," he recalls. "Schools have started and children are back in school—we did that. Iraqi policemen are on the street—we made that happen. Buildings are being reconstructed—we made that happen."

His main mission was to assess structures in and around Baghdad and estimate the cost to repair them. By the time he finished these drills, the self-styled "jack of a lot of trades" had compiled a spreadsheet 20 feet long and 6 feet wide. His surveys then went to managers at Bechtel Corp., with whom the Corps had a preestablished contract, who in turn handed them off to Iraqi contractors to do the work. Iraqi officials were also kept in the loop.

Structures included police academies, police and fire stations, military installations, municipal buildings, the Ministries of Finance, Trade and Transportation and—most significantly for Aldrich—more than 1,500 schools.

Schools were personally important because his wife Cathy has been a second-grade teacher in Mesa, Ariz., for 15 years. "Schools?" he says. "When your wife's a schoolteacher, you just beam."

They were objectively important because schools are key to the nation-building effort, to winning hearts and minds. Getting kids back into school is vital, said a UNICEF official earlier this year, "so as to give a much needed structure to their lives and set them on the road to recovery from the trauma of their wartime experiences."

Timing was crucial. Ted Morris, an aide to Amb. L Paul Bremer III, came to Aldrich and other Division people. "I need you guys to find the schools in Baghdad and get them assessed," he told them. "And I need it done in two weeks."

Aldrich immediately visited the Ministry of Housing and Construction where he met a female official named Nazda. "I need a list of the schools, and you've got three days to pull it off," he remembers telling her.

As with so many things in the postwar zone, easier said than done. Baathist Party members had controlled the Ministry of Education, and when they fled as coalition troops advanced, they burned education records. The resourceful Nazda simply went to janitors and other workers closer to the classrooms and found what she needed. She delivered it to Aldrich within three days.

Aldrich had the data translated and entered onto a spreadsheet. "To assess something you need a standard," he explains. "The team developed a list of the bare mini-

Aldrich in Abu Garuab maximum security prison. Last Ramadan, Saddam issued amnesty to all its inmates.

mum necessities for a school." One page long, with bulleted suggestions, the list went back to the ministry where 60 to 70 officials pored over it. "We asked them to use these standards as a guide," Aldrich says. "We told them we wanted them to come up with Iraqi standards, not U.S. standards."

Surprisingly, the Iraqis agreed to everything—with two additional requests:

--Chalkboards, because the old schools didn't having them, using instead a black square on a rough masonry wall;

--Drainage away from the schools, because under the old system, when sewers backed up, they would pond in the schoolyard.

Then some 140 Iraqi engineers spread out across the city with the checklist, which covered such issues as the school's structural condition and whether there was any unexploded ordnance around. Within the 14-day period ordered by Morris, Aldrich reckons he got a 90% return rate on the location and shape of the city's schools—"annotated and providing detailed information on the quantities and prices for each item."

The paperwork filled 50 boxes.

Bechtel picked some 800 schools, UNICEF 150 more, and started awarding contracts. Aldrich was also intent on leaving institutional memory available for the record-less Ministry of Education, so he made all the information available to its officials. "With a little knowledge about contracting, and a basement full of money, you can do anything," he says with a laugh, referring to confiscated Iraqi funds used to pay contractors.

Even with upgrades, the schools are a mess. "The country's been neglected for 30 years," says Aldrich. "The schools have no electricity, no running water, no cooling, if you have a door you're lucky, not enough

teaching materials. Every school in Baghdad needs to be bulldozed down, in my personal opinion." On the bright side, "teachers are very dedicated and the children couldn't wait for school to start."

His cool-under-fire background at several hot LZs over the years gives Aldrich a unique prism through which he parses his views about Iraq. While he understands the need for rapid progress in Iraq, he also wonders about how some efforts are unfolding. "You're working in a culture based on fear," he says. "People say, 'Oh, if I do this will I get shot?' Pushing them may not work.. In my opinion, there are (U.S.) people missing that boat."

After he came home, Aldrich slept for a week. Then he spent a busy September catching up on his contracting work in Arizona. Lately, he's made a few speeches in the Phoenix area and plans to give more. In his talks, he emphasizes three themes:

--Americans should sleep well because "these young men and women are the finest (soldiers) on the face of the earth—they do their jobs without reservation." The Vietnam vet adds, "I did that as a young man, but these people are really great—it was a very moving experience for me."

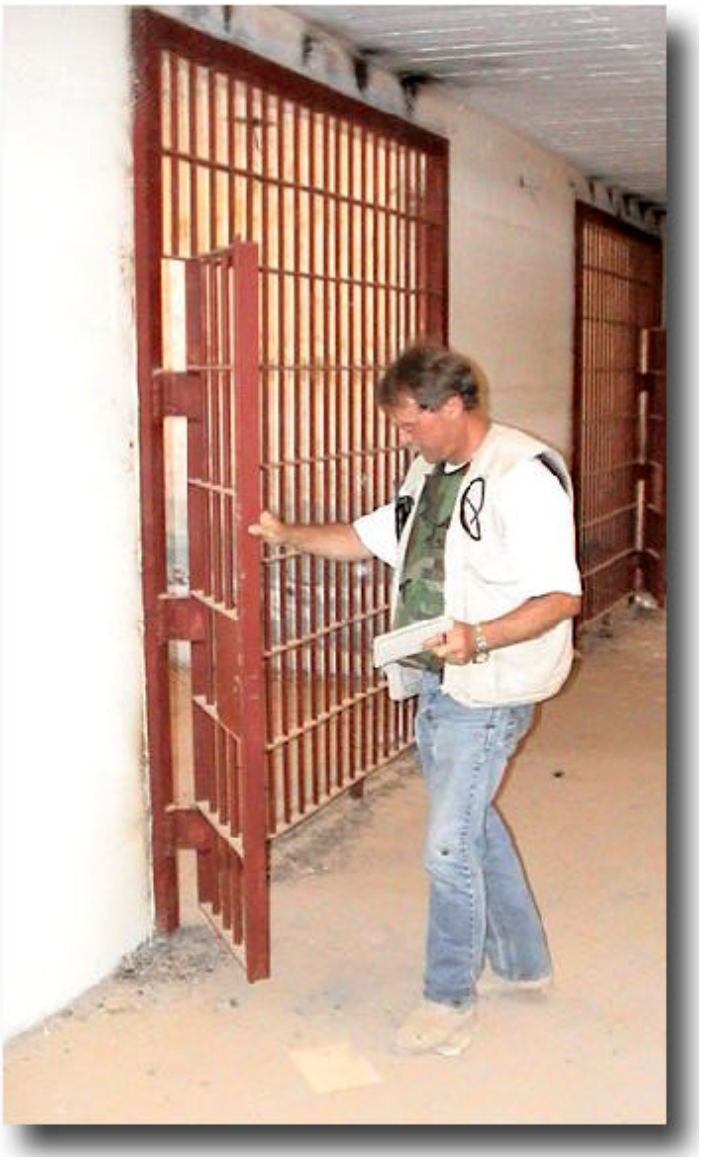
--He thinks 98% of the people in Baghdad want Americans there. "They are humbled by our sacrifice," Aldrich says. "I've never been so impressed with the willingness of a people to do whatever it takes to get the job done."

--Stay the course. "If we abandon Iraq…we will make one of the biggest mistakes in the history of the U. S.," he concludes. "We're doing this for our children and for their children. The Iraqis are intelligent people; they just need guidance and, obviously, security. We need to do whatever it takes to see a responsible government for the Iraqi people."

Despite—or perhaps because of—his own fulfilling tour of duty, Aldrich says he "cannot recommend that anyone go—that's up to them. Don't go for the money—the amount isn't that much more. But if they're looking for an adventure and want to do something good…

"This is going to stick with me for the rest of my life."

On-On!



In the end, it wasn't Aldrich who surrendered.

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